

# Departmental Assessment Liaison Report: Summer 2013

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By Erica McCormack, Humanities Department Liaison

## **Background and purpose of assessment**

At the end of the Spring 2013 semester, Music faculty in the Humanities department were asked to complete a surveymonkey survey about student learning. The questions were designed to yield input about program-level student learning outcomes (SLOs) for students earning an AFA in Music Education or Music Performance. In Summer 2013, as part of a special assignment, I analyzed those responses and compared faculty's written responses to the draft of some music program-level outcomes that had been previously suggested by full-time faculty in Fall 2012, Spring 2013, and in older drafts of music program SLOs. This allowed me to identify assessable outcomes across the selected "assessment unit"—the Music program (AFA in Music Education or Music Performance)—that I will use to assist faculty in the creation of a viable assessment tool and pilot process to give us usable data for improving student learning in the Humanities.

I also used the Summer 2013 term to revisit the findings from the 2007-2008 Humanities departmental assessment in order to incorporate those recommendations into the new construction of a Humanities department assessment plan. It is vital for the new phase of departmental assessment to account for the lessons learned in previous phases of departmental assessment.

All components of the Summer 2013 project were implemented to help me draft a departmental assessment plan for the next several semesters. These investigations and analyses are allowing me to hit the ground running with music program assessment activities in the Fall 2013 semester. This constitutes a noticeable difference from the Fall 2012 semester, when I was embarking on my initial phase as department liaison and therefore spending several weeks filling in my background knowledge and laying the groundwork for department assessment activities. This special project lays the groundwork for a large-scale assessment process in the Fall 2013 and Spring 2014 semesters as well as for continued expansion of assessment projects across the Humanities department.

## **Data Analysis and Findings**

A music performance-related SLO is scheduled to be assessed this academic year, so I was particularly interested in faculty feedback about music performance outcomes. I found that the input from the music survey respondents (all four full-time music faculty plus four part-

time faculty) related to student outcomes in music performance were consistent, both among themselves and compared to other drafts of music performance outcomes.

Previous drafts of the music performance outcome included: *Student will be able to use skills of performance, aural analysis, improvisation, and composition to solve problems of music teaching and learning.* However, in the 2012-2013 academic year, the full-time music faculty, in consultation with me, revised and narrowed the SLO to: *Student will demonstrate theoretical concepts and repertoire appropriate to the student's course level on their instrument or in their vocal range.*

We broke the larger, earlier outcome down to a scale that we expect will allow us to generate more meaningful data in our unit assessment. The survey feedback demonstrated that this current SLO, *Student will demonstrate theoretical concepts and repertoire appropriate to the student's course level on their instrument or in their vocal range*, accurately reflects the concerns of the department faculty.

All of the respondents to the Music survey indicated that proficiency in performance, either vocal or instrumental, was one of the top three outcomes they would expect from a student earning an AFA in Music Performance, while 75% also listed it as one of the top three outcomes for an AFA in Music Education. The other 25% provided other outcomes that may implicitly require performance proficiency, such as “relate to students they will be teaching” or “be able to analyze a student of any instrument and offer comments for improvement.” It should be noted that these two comments represent goals that are *not* measurable outcomes, but one could argue that it would be impossible to meet these goals and offer such feedback to another person without being able to use those critical abilities to first develop one's own performance. Performance skills are certainly a priority, whether students are earning an AFA in Music Performance or in Music Education.

## **Use of Findings**

While reviewing the Departmental Humanities Assessment Results Notes (DHARN) on the Fall 2008 survey, I was struck by the recommendation that future assessments “investigat[e] an hypothesis, rather than a student body” (DHARN 16). This supports my own reflections and recommendations from our 2012-13 Humanities department assessment focused on music theory, which taught me that an assessment is most useful when it addresses a specific question, not when it tries, either explicitly or implicitly, to include everything in the assessment tool.

This recommendation to identify and maintain a discrete focus will be applied to future assessment efforts in the Humanities department, primarily by ensuring that the SLOs around which we design an assessment tool are as specific and accurate as possible. Since we rewrote a music performance-related SLO last year, faculty will be asked which other components (if

any) from the older versions of the SLO need to be accounted for in new SLOs, and we will draft those.

Keeping this tighter focus in mind while expanding our assessment efforts as a department, our Fall 2013 assessment will include the continuation of the Music 101 assessment, plus a pilot of a Music 102 assessment. We are also thinking about piloting a philosophy reading assessment in this academic year, pending additional discussions among philosophy faculty members.

A pilot assessment related to the music performance outcome, noted above, will also take place in the Fall 2013 semester, with a full-scale assessment to follow in the Spring 2014 semester. I will be devising additional surveys for all other discipline/department units in the Humanities (i.e. Fine Arts and Philosophy) to generate the same kinds of discussions and feedback that the Music survey did and thus to fill in additional specifics on the Humanities assessment schedule.

## **Success Factors**

Comments in the survey that corroborated the importance faculty placed on performance proficiency included one part-timer who broke the idea of proficient performance down to three sub-outcomes: “Play with good rhythm; play with a well-balanced tone; know their major scales and key signatures.” A full-timer specified that performance proficiency would include a student who could play “standard music selections in at least three contrasting periods/styles/genres)” as well as with “appropriate technique/skills in one (main) instrument.” Another full-time faculty member phrased this as “perform, within the confines of the common role their instrument plays, three to five sub-styles of music.”

This feedback not only validates the current language of the specific SLO under consideration for the Fall 2013-Spring 2014 assessment, but it also provides important material for validating other Music SLOs to be assessed in upcoming semesters, such as *Student will be able to demonstrate performance competence in a variety of periods, styles, and genres*. The language from the survey will also be valuable in developing appropriate rubrics and assessment tools for these SLOs.

Furthermore, I have begun to engage faculty in discussion about whether using language like “appropriate to the course level” in the music performance rubric or whether making a distinct rubric for each of the course levels is preferable. Beginning this discussion over the summer and continuing it in the beginning of the semester is preferable to beginning it midway through the semester.

## **Recommendations**

The feedback derived from the Music survey was useful in confirming the validity of a program-level SLO scheduled for assessment in a pilot this semester as well as in beginning to establish the language and validity of other SLOs scheduled for assessment down the road (and if the feedback had been different, it would have helped us revise the learning outcomes for the music program).

I will take these comments generated by the survey, as well as some of my follow-up questions, to the Music faculty for an additional review to determine whether they think it is best to keep the SLO about music performance as it currently stands, or if any of this other language supplied by full- and part-time faculty through the survey should be reflected in the SLO or in the rubric used with the tool.

I will also continue to use surveys to solicit faculty feedback about the different disciplines (including Philosophy and Fine Arts) within the Humanities department to ensure that each successive phase of the departmental assessment begins with an SLO that is valid and as clearly-articulated as possible in order to generate meaningful data that faculty can use to improve student learning.

### **Humanities Department Assessment Schedule (Working Draft): Music**

<b>Unit of Study</b>	<b>Write/Revise SLO</b>	<b>SLO</b>	<b>Rubric</b>	<b>Data Collection Process</b>	<b>Data Analysis Process</b>	<b>Closing the Loop</b>
<b>Music 101 (Theory)</b>	Fall 2012	Students will be able to read and notate music in respect to the elements of rhythm, melody, and harmony.	Descriptive rubric in development (Spring 2013 semester, weeks 4-6): (meets/ emerging/ does not meet outcome).	Pilot assessment "HWC Fundamentals of Music Theory" given in Fall 2012 semester (wk 1 and wk 16). Assessment given in Spring 2013 semester (wk 1 and wk 16)	Spring 2013 semester, weeks 2-14: Wk 1 and Wk 16 data will be compared; data from multiple sections of the course will be compared; data from sections of the assessment attached to various units of the course will be compared	Spring 2013 semester, weeks 13-16

<b>Music 102 (Theory)</b>	Fall 2013	Students will be able to read and notate music in respect to the elements of rhythm, melody, and harmony.	Descriptive rubric in development (Spring 2014 semester, weeks 4-6): (meets/ emerging/ does not meet outcome).	"HWC Fundamentals of Music Theory-102" given in Fall 2013 semester (wk 1 and wk 16). Assessment given in Spring 2013 semester (wk 1 and wk 16)	Spring 2014 semester, weeks 2-14: Wk 1 and Wk 16 data will be compared; data from the Music 102 course will be compared to data from Music 101 sections; data from sections of the assessment attached to various units of the course will be compared	Spring 2014 semester, weeks 13-16
<b>Music 181, 182, 281, 282 (Applied Music): Private lessons</b>	Fall 2013 (weeks 1-3)	Student will demonstrate theoretical concepts and repertoire appropriate to the student's course level on their instrument or in their vocal range.	Fall 2013 (weeks 4-6): Performance rubric used for juried exhibitions. Rubric should be modified from a number-based to a descriptive rubric for effective use by all instructors.  5 Criteria: Tone Quality/ Intonation, Accuracy/ Memorization, Technique, Interpretation/ Style, Stage Presence	Fall 2013 (week 16?) pilot assessment. Students in private lessons (4 levels of courses) take a juried evaluation (2 jurors per student).  Assessment given in Fall 2013 semester (week 16?)	Spring 2014 semester, weeks 2-14: Data may be compared to provide information about students meeting or approaching outcomes at course levels (181, 182, 281, 282) as well as students on different instruments or vocal ranges.	Spring 2014 semester, weeks 13-16
<b>Music 181, 182, 281, 282 (Applied Music)</b>	Fall 2014	Student will be able to demonstrate performance competence in	Fall 2014 (weeks 4-6): Performance rubric used for juried exhibitions.	Fall 2014 (week 16?) pilot assessment. Students in private lessons	Spring 2015 semester, weeks 2-14: Data may be compared to provide	Spring 2015 semester,

<b>Music): Private lessons</b>		a variety of periods, styles, and genres.	Compile selections representing different styles, different levels of competence.	(4 levels of courses) take a juried evaluation (2 jurors per student).  Assessment given in Fall 2014 semester (week 16?)	information about students meeting or approaching outcomes at course levels (181, 182, 281, 282) as well as students on different instruments or vocal ranges	weeks 13-16
<b>Music 107, Music 108, Music 109, Music 131</b>	Fall 2015	Student will demonstrate skills for effective musical collaboration (verbal, written, and performance-based)	Fall 2015 (weeks 4-6): rubric for verbal, written, performance collaboration.	Fall 2015 (week 16?) pilot assessment: tool given in Fall 2015 semester (wk 16). Assessment given in Spring 2016 semester (wk 1 and wk 16)	Spring 2016 semester, weeks 2-14: Fall 2015 Wk 16 data will be compared with Wk 1 and Wk 16 data from Spring 2016	Spring 2016 semester, weeks 13-16
<b><i>Vote to keep or drop this SLO (is it now covered better by other SLOs?)</i></b>	Fall 2016	Student will be able to use skills of performance, aural analysis, improvisation, and composition to solve problems of music teaching and learning.				
<b><i>Give in Music 124, Music 221 courses</i></b>	Fall 2017	Students will be able to demonstrate a knowledge and understanding	Fall 2017 (weeks 4-6): develop rubric for music history, style, and	Pilot assessment given in Fall 2017 semester (wk 1 and wk 16). Assessment given in Spring	Spring 2018 semester, weeks 2-14: Wk 1 and Wk 16 data will be compared; data from	Spring 2018 semester, weeks 13-16

<b><i>or coincide with juried exhib?</i></b>		of music in its cultural context and an appreciation of a variety of music	context knowledge.	2018 semester (wk 1 and wk 16)	sections of the assessment attached to various units of coursework will be compared	
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**Humanities Department Assessment Schedule (Working Draft)**  
(to be filled in after surveying all Humanities faculty on surveymonkey)

<b>Unit of Study</b>	<b>Write/ Revise SLO</b>	<b>SLO</b>	<b>Rubric</b>	<b>Data Collection Process</b>	<b>Data Analysis Process</b>	<b>Closing the Loop</b>
	Fall 2014	Recognize patterns and make associations to, within, and among artifacts in order to draw reasonable inferences.				
	Fall 2015	Analyze artifacts by identifying formal elements, the presence of cultural perspectives, and historical and stylistic characteristics in the works presented.				
	Fall 2016	Interpret artifacts by				

		using the analysis to demonstrate understanding of the intended meaning and reflected values of the works presented.				
	Fall 2017	Evaluate artifacts by establishing or applying criteria to assess the merit and value of the works presented (with respect to the works' originality, impact, virtuosity, relevance, and richness).				
	Fall 2018	Communicate their ideas, particularly those resulting from the skills above, through written and oral means, and, when appropriate, visual or other modes as well.				



